

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
JUNE 19, 1997

PROJECTS REVIEWED

Convened: 8:00 AM

Rainier Playfields
Seattle University 12th Avenue Street Improvements
Harbor Steps Development / Post Alley
Denny Way / Lake Union CSO Control

DISCUSSION

Design Review Evaluation

Adjourned: 3:30 PM

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Barbara Swift, Chair
Moe Batra
Carolyn Darwish
Gail Dubrow
Robert Foley
Jon Layzer
Rick Sundberg

STAFF PRESENT

Marcia Wagoner
Vanessa Murdock

061997.1 Project: **RAINIER PLAYFIELD**
 Phase: Contract Documents
 Presenters: Robin Kordik, Department of Parks and Recreation
 Matt Suhadolnik, SvR Design
 Rich Murakami, Arai Jackson
 Time: 1 hour (0.3%)

The Rainier Playfield renovation project is located just southwest of the intersection of 38th Ave S. and S. Oregon St. Since last appearing before the Commission, the site plan of the project has changed. An 18 stall parking lot has been removed. Without having to accommodate the surface parking lot, the design has been able to respond more positively to the exiting slope and land forms. On site are two basketball courts, a sandbox, a tennis court and a comfort station that has public rest rooms, storage area and a concession. The comfort station is oriented to the south, toward the playfield. A “viewing” berm will be built up between the tennis and basketball courts, complementing the land forms to the east. The comfort station will have a CMU base. Louvers will be incorporated into the wall above the CMU to provide natural ventilation. The roof form will slope back to the north, thus maximizing natural light from the south and providing a visual expression of the collection of water.

Discussion

- Sundberg:** What are your thoughts regarding split face versus smooth face in light of graffiti?
- Murakami:** We have found that split face discourages graffiti.
- Sundberg:** I like the comfort station building, I think it has a nice presence on the ball field. I am, however, concerned about the curve in the front. Given the low bid process, how can you be sure that the quality of construction necessary to make that curve successful be achieved? I would be inclined not to have a curve.
- Dubrow:** The policy that directs building activity to accommodate current demand instead of planning for a more equitable future raises an interesting issue. I am referring to the decision to build fewer women’s toilets than men’s.
- Kordik:** There are four different age groups of boys baseball and five different age groups of boy’s football that use these fields. The concern is that the boys are not using the facilities, rather they are using the outside of the building. The building was originally 900 square feet and it has now grown to 1,000 square feet. This facility will be heavily used, by all of southern King County. I would have to agree that we may be overly responsive to immediate need, which is of concern.
- Dubrow:** You have stated good reasons for doing so, however I would ask that this policy be revisited at a policy level by the Department.
- Swift:** What colors are you going to be using? Will the roof be colored?
- Murakami:** The roof will be clear-seal cedar, with bonderized metal - similar to galvanized metal but darker, with more texture. The CMU will be an interval color - neutral.

- Swift:** As the roof accentuates the collection of water, I would recommend developing where it will go.
- Foley:** Will it drop from the roof, or go directly into a pipe?
- Murakami:** We have been thinking of making the water visible right to where it will be collected.
- Swift:** What was not immediately clear about the site last time was how all of the activities programmed for the space were going to fit on this bowl shaped site. Some of those concerns have been answered by removing the parking lot. Another concern was how you were going to maintain and respond to the grades. The way the grades wrap around the circulation paths is effective. Having removed the parking you have resolved the major issues of concern.
- Kordik:** Funnily enough the major supporters of removing the parking were those for whom the parking was mostly intended.
- Foley:** I see quite an expanse of paving in the middle of the site. What is the reason for that?
- Suhadolnik:** That has been retained for the play structure. The bosque of trees there is intended to relieve the paving.
- Dubrow:** Consider using the trees to provide more connection between the basketball courts and the upper and lower play areas.
- Swift:** Can you remind me of the scale and nature of the trees to the east?
- Suhadolnik:** They are cottonwoods. Along 38th Ave S. they are quite large. Those located at the northeast corner of the site are storm damaged. When you are in the play area you feel quite enclosed. Proposing additional trees would be problematic for security reasons.
- Swift:** Your context is quite umbrageous. I think it is great to look at a tree replacement approach. The trend is to replace cottonwoods with smaller trees - maybe you want to look at the scale issue before determining your replacement tree type.
- Dubrow:** What is the rationale behind the re-orientation of the comfort station?
- Suhadolnik:** The concessions are oriented toward the playfield.
- Dubrow:** I wonder if there are opportunities to acknowledge the basketball court on the north side of the comfort station - perhaps by introducing benches on that side.
- Sundberg:** The building has enough interest, but I think the benches will help.
- Swift:** The current design responds to the immediate users, rather than responding to a larger civic responsibility for a balanced program for the future.

Action next Page

ACTION: The Commission recommends approval of the revised plan which is a vast improvement on the previous scheme. The Commission is enthusiastic about the decision to remove the surface parking lot from the interior of the site, especially given the pressure for use on a diminishing land resource. The Commission greatly appreciates the simple and clear presentation. In addition, the Commission offers the following comments and suggestions:

- re-evaluate the curved roof,
- seriously consider moving the electrical function into the storage area in anticipation of future need to expand the women's rest room,
- consider incorporating benches on the north side of the comfort station to acknowledge other site activities, and
- manage the roof water as an opportunity to express the collection of storm water.

Furthermore, the Commission urges the Department of Parks and Recreation to establish a clear policy for the distribution of facilities around the city that is equity oriented.

061997.2 Project: **SEATTLE UNIVERSITY 12TH AVENUE STREET IMPROVEMENTS**
 Phase: Street Use Permit Request
 Presenters: Joe Connor, Seattle University
 Steve Porter, Coughlin, Porter and Ludeen
 Misty Philbin, Berger Partnership
 Attending: Paul Janos, Department of Construction & Land Use
 Time: 1 hour (0.3%)
 Commissioner Rick Sundberg Abstaining from Action motion

Seattle University has developed a Major Institution Master Plan (MIMP) which will be presented to Seattle City Council on June 20. Part of that MIMP calls for street improvements to three blocks of 12th Avenue. The street improvements along 12th Avenue have been broken down into three sections: the first from E. Marion to E. Spring, the second from E. Columbia to E. Marion (where the new Law School will be located) and the third section from Cherry to E. Columbia.

E. Marion to E. Spring

Street trees will be standardized, with a red maple probably chosen. Street trees will be placed in wells in an 11 foot wide sidewalk. A view portal with seating will provide a view of the Chapel.

E. Columbia to E. Marion

Plantings will be simplified and a double row of trees established.

Cherry to E. Columbia

The double row of trees will be continued, retaining some existing conifers. A 2 foot band of brushed concrete will surround the seating areas.

Discussion

- Swift:** I know the University of Washington has a concept for their campus, what is Seattle University's concept?
- Connor:** We want to give the perimeter of the campus an identifiable edge through the use of common elements such as lighting, landscape, and brick and stone portals to define the principle entries.
- Dubrow:** What triggers this project coming before the Design Commission?
- Wagoner:** A street use permit request.
- Swift:** What is the scale of the street lights?
- Philbin:** They are standard Franklin lights, 11 feet tall. The existing glaring spot lights that shine down from the buildings are bothersome to the community members.
- Dubrow:** Does the University have a public art program?
- Connor:** No.
- Philbin:** Each seating area will have two benches behind which will be a three foot concrete wall with a reveal.
- Darwish:** Will the wall be gray? Will there be any treatment to discourage graffiti?
- Philbin:** The wall will be treated with a graffiti barrier which allows the graffiti to be simply washed off. In addition, the seating areas will be lit and thus more visible.
- Dubrow:** Are there any bus stops on 12th Avenue?
- Connor:** No.
- Philbin:** The concept for the street is to create a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Swift:** This generous effort on the part of an institution suggests a policy and concern for the surrounding community.
- Connor:** We have tried to be reasonable neighbors. There has been some comment from a few neighbors claiming that Seattle University has turned it's back on 12th Avenue. We disagree. We have purposely not put up an wrought-iron fence around the perimeter of the campus, opting instead for an open transparent edge. We have tried to keep sight lines into the campus from the perimeter while still maintaining an edge.
- Janos:** My understanding of the situation is that the community is looking for substantial amenities that genuinely encourage pedestrian circulation along 12th Avenue. There is considerable controversy regarding whether the proposed street improvements genuinely meet that goal. Some members of the community feel that there is no direct relationship between the buildings and the sidewalk.
- Swift:** As a pedestrian walking around the perimeter of the campus, how can I enter the site? What invites me in?
- Connor:** We are putting a fence in to screen the pedestrians on the sidewalk from the loading dock near Cherry. In addition, a major landscaped entry will be put in at Cherry and 12th Avenue.
- Swift:** As a pedestrian, at what points can I come into the campus?
- Connor:** There is an entry portal at 12th Avenue and Columbia, we have enhanced the stairwell and access at 12th Avenue and E. Columbia, and there is another entry portal at E. Marion and 12th Avenue.

Dubrow: It seems that the street section you are speaking about is not perceived as accessible by the surrounding neighbors.

Connor: We have looked at this section of street in particular. The residential scale and nature of the campus unfortunately does not lend itself to a pedestrian scale street.

Sundberg: The campus is built on a grid - the only piece that sits off the grid is the Chapel. Traditionally the buildings at Seattle University have been sited in a residential fashion, with large front yards. The University is trying to offer glimpses into this internal, residential-style campus.

Foley: Is it true that portals only occur at intersections, and that pedestrian access points are only located at the corners?

Connor: Yes.

Dubrow: If it seems impossible to answer the community by providing genuine pedestrian access, perhaps a public artwork might enhance the pedestrian experience along 12th Avenue. If it is not possible to adapt an existing building to more graciously address the street, perhaps more care needs to be taken in the sidewalk.

Connor: One of the main residence halls overlooks 12th Avenue. The building is concrete with punched-out windows. We will be making improvements to the bathrooms in the building by putting in some opaque windows. That will help relieve the blank facade.

Porter: I don't think there is a lot of room in the right-of-way for an art piece.

Dubrow: It would have to be a shallow piece.

Foley: I appreciate your strategy of opening up the campus. However, given this specific location on the site, another design response might be warranted.

Dubrow: A screening function is appropriate in this case. The challenge is to draw the attention away from the buildings.

Darwish: Are you putting in a bench at 12th Avenue and Cherry Street?

Connor: We would like to pull the bench away from such a busy intersection. Eventually we would like to put a sign at that corner.

Swift: In thinking about campus edges, I am struck by the fact that along the University of Washington campus on 15th Ave NE, despite the concrete wall, public accessibility is suggested by the fact that one can see the ground plane. The landscape in conjunction with the street provide the site for the buildings and begin to set the tone for the overall site.

I have a species-specific suggestion; cork oaks are slow growing and perhaps not an appropriate street tree, however they are unusual. The Woodland Park Zoo has salvaged trees in the past - you might want to contact them before removing the cork oaks.

Connor: The issue of access and openness is challenging. The entry to the Bellerman residence hall will be "dressed up" when we build the University Center facility.

Dubrow: It might be in your interest to color the pavement leading up to the seating area.

Foley: Is there any merit in varying the landscape material at the view portal?

Philbin: The sidewalk will poke into the campus at that location.

- Porter:** The engineering department of the City has approved of our design, however a street use permit could not be issued before Design Commission review of the non-standard items.
- Swift:** I think there is general support to personalize the street.
- Janos:** In the Department of Construction and Land Use we are struggling with the phrase “pedestrian-inviting”. Our sense is that “plain concrete and a bench”, in the words of the community, does not meet the intent of the phrase.
- Darwish:** What is the community looking for?
- Janos:** The community is set on having the law school clinics open up onto the street. They also like human scale lighting, fountains, and kiosks.
- Swift:** Has their focus been on physical access?
- Janos:** No, instead on the fact that none of the buildings deliver pedestrians directly into the street. Seattle University was accommodating in the siting of the new Law School entry.
- Connor:** The Citizens Advisory Committee is in favor of the proposed Law School entries, as is DCLU, in concept.
- Janos:** Our feeling is that the entries strike a balance.
- Swift:** In the organization of a campus, it is important to have a hierarchy of entries; one must first enter the campus before entering the individual buildings.
- Dubrow:** In terms of establishing a strong pedestrian corridor, this plan moves in that direction. The missing element is an art in public places program. All elements in your plan are very functional. What you need to add are more place-giving elements. Artwork lends eccentricity as opposed to uniformity.
- Connor:** We do have artwork on campus, and we encourage people to come onto the campus. One of our primary goals in creating the Chapel was to attract people. The portals themselves are substantial pieces that are not without beauty. We are also trying to create public areas within the campus.
- Dubrow:** There are two ways to make a place more “public”: one is to bring people in, the other is to broadcast the message outward. The latter is missing in your plan.
- Swift:** The purview of the Commission is in the public right-of-way. While interesting, the questions raised by the community blur the issues at hand.
- ACTION:** **The Commission recommends approval of the proposed street improvements with the following comments:**
- **an evaluation of visual transparencies at the campus edge, as well as an evaluation of the perception of pedestrian access, is urged,**
 - **consider a balance of linear treatment with visual access, and**
 - **consider a variety of tools, including public art, to make a gesture to the surrounding community.**
- The Commission looks forward to seeing the resolution of the above named issues at a future presentation.**

061997.3**COMMISSION BUSINESS**

- A. MINUTES OF JUNE 5 1997 Approved as amended.
- B. PIKE STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT A programming and design session for street improvements to Pike Street is scheduled for June 25th.
- C. CONVENTION CENTER EXPANSION - DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW MEETING Swift, Dubrow and Wagoner attended the first Downtown Design Review meeting for the hotel portion of the Convention Center expansion project. The Design Review Board focused mainly on the tower portion of the project and how that piece would meet the street. A rationale for a major public space at the corner of 7th and Pike was recognized at the end of the meeting.
- D. CONVENTION CENTER EXPANSION - WACTC DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE At the last meeting, Commissioners and staff urged the internal design review team of the convention center to develop and follow design guidelines for the project, and pointed out that budget cuts could not be applied across the board.
- E. SUSTAINABILITY EXHIBIT Opening on July 2nd at 4:00 PM in the Land Use Lobby of the Dexter Horton Building.
- F. SOUTH WATERFRONT Significant programming changes have occurred in the South Waterfront project since it last appeared before the Design Commission. The Commission has requested another briefing on the alternatives that are being developed for the EIS.
- G. SIDEWALK AND RELATED STORM DRAINAGE STATEMENT OF LEGISLATIVE INTENT Staff from OMP will brief the Commission in August.
- H. ARTS COMMISSION LETTER The Commission was copied a letter from the Seattle Arts Commission to the Seattle Police Department regarding the City policy on street amenities. The Commission is interested in working with other city Departments to help encourage pedestrian activity on the street while providing adequate public safety measures to ensure that all can enjoy the unique street amenities in Seattle's neighborhoods.

061997.4 Project: **HARBOR STEPS DEVELOPMENT / POST ALLEY**
Phase: Street Use Permit Request
Presenters: David Hewitt, Hewitt Isley
Denny Onslow, Harbor Properties
Martha Barkman, Harbor Properties
Time: 1 hour (hourly)

The Harbor Steps project has four phases of development. The first phase is completed and sits to the south of Harbor Steps, fronting on Western Avenue. The second phase, to be completed this summer, is also to the south of Harbor Steps, fronting First Avenue. The third and fourth phases of the development are to the north of the steps and include the Erickson and Oceanic buildings. In 1989 a street vacation granted three skybridges across Post Alley; two between phases 1 and 2, and one between phases 3 and 4. The project is requesting an additional span across the alley which will occur immediately north of Harbor Steps to create a plaza. This plaza will bridge an outdoor restaurant/retail area on the west side of the alley with an entry to office space on the east side of the alley. The plaza will be accessible from First Avenue via a walkway. This triangular plaza, pointing north up Post Alley, will serve to knit together the four phases of the Harbor Steps Development while providing an additional public open space and adding to the vitality of Harbor Steps.

The four criteria for permitting the construction of a skybridge as outlined in Policy 6: Pedestrian Circulation, of The Downtown Plan, Land Use & Transportation Plan for Downtown Seattle Adopted by Resolution 29139 (December , 1995) are met by the project:

- A. Views along view corridors designated in Policy 17: Street Level Views will not be adversely affected.
- B. Topographic and functional conditions require pedestrian circulation above or below the street or an unsafe or congested condition exists at street level.
- C. Grade separation will not reduce or detract from a reasonable level of pedestrian activity on the street.
- D. Direct physical and visual access to/from the facility will be provided to adjacent sidewalks, open spaces or public plazas.

Discussion

Swift: The previous Commission membership reviewed many requests for skybridges and became quite well versed in what policies the City had regarding skybridges. This proposal does not block any views, has obvious and clear public access, and provides clear visual access to the bridge. I do wonder as I look at the design if I will perceive the plaza bridge as a public place. The standard rules for what is a public place changes with the place. Post Alley by its very nature and uses encourages people to poke around. I think anchoring this plaza with a restaurant is a great move.

- Barkman:** We are looking for a more casual, neighborhood restaurant; one where it is just as easy to drink a cup of coffee for a few hours as it is to grab a meal.
- Layzer:** The portion of Post Alley that is in the Pike Place Market is so vibrant - this project is a great blend between the Market and the south downtown.
- Onslow:** Part of what influenced our decision to put a restaurant at this location has been the Briazz experience. Since it opened at the corner of 5th Avenue and Union the outdoor tables have been used every day except for four snow days. People in this town will sit outside if you give them a place to sit and gather.
- Hewitt:** The space below the plaza bridge will be covered and could be used for outdoor concerts, thus providing another opportunity for gathering.
- Wagoner:** The original project billed the skybridge as a connection between two private buildings. This new piece is a public plaza/bridge.
- Swift:** It is very clear that there is a public good gained in exchange for the aerial vacation. One concern I had had before was how the details and space would be used to define the subtle transitions between public and private space. You have done that very successfully.
- Foley:** There could be the perception that the outdoor space in front of the restaurant is only for restaurant patrons. Is there some way to demonstrate the public nature of this space?
- Hewitt:** We have discussed that at length. I think the details will be key in indicating the public domain. For example, how the trellis is wrapped around from the entry at First Avenue through the plaza.
- Onslow:** It is a good issue to raise.
- Swift:** The granite wall that you are proposing to use from the existing building is very distinctive.
- Hewitt:** We are looking to frame the space around the restaurant as opposed to roping it off.
- Layzer:** I think the free standing granite wall will draw people in, especially given the views. I was originally worried about the disjointed character of phases 1 and 2. I no longer have that concern - the Harbor Steps are such a draw.
- Hewitt:** There will be 1,000 people living here, use by them will activate the space.
- Darwish:** What about the art work that is currently at the plaza level at Harbor Steps?
- Onslow:** That piece will eventually move on, as it is on rotation. Ideally, rotating art is great, however it takes a lot of energy to keep it going. We are lucky to have the Seattle Art Museum as a neighbor.
- Foley:** I think it is important to recognize the unique relationship between the Harbor Steps, the Harbor plaza bridge and Post Alley.
- Hewitt:** The precedent of bridges across Post Alley has already been established - what we will be doing is not out of context.
- Foley:** Part of the benefit of having a restaurant on the plaza bridge is the generating of activity and vitality that will make people on the Steps feel that much more comfortable. It may be considered a tangible benefit in the public right-of-way.
- Swift:** The response you have heard here today is favorable, the only question being in the subtle use of materials in the details which has already been demonstrated today.

ACTION: The Commission recommends approval of the street use request, urging the pursuit of further attention to details that would clarify comfortable public access.

061997.5 Project: **DENNY WAY / LAKE UNION CSO CONTROL PROJECT**
Phase: Briefing
Presenters: Judy Cochran, King County Metro
Time: 0.5 hour (0.3%)

The goal of the Denny Way/Lake Union Combined Sewer Overflow Control Project is to improve the water quality of Lake Union and Elliott Bay by reducing untreated combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the area tributary to the Denny Regulator. CSOs are discharges of sewage and stormwater that are released into local water bodies during periods of heavy rainfall when the volume of combined sewage traveling through pipelines to treatment facilities exceeds the system's capacity. The Denny Way CSO, located at King County's Denny Regulator in Myrtle Edwards Park along the Elliott Bay waterfront, discharges 300-600 million gallons of CSOs annually into Elliott Bay. King County's Dexter Regulator, located on the west side of Lake Union, discharges an average of 15 million gallons annually into Lake Union. Seattle's Lake Union CSO's discharge an average of 86 gallons annually into Lake Union. The Denny/Lake Union Project is a multi-phase project. Phase 1, currently under construction, is a Seattle sewer enlargement project in the east Lake Union area. Phase 2, also a Seattle project, would complete Seattle's sewer enlargement program along the south side of Lake Union and connect with Phase 3 / 4. Design and construction of Phase 2 is dependent on and would be coordinated with King County's Phase 3 / 4, which would control CSO discharges at the Dexter and Denny regulators to one untreated overflow per year. Two alternatives are currently under consideration for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th phases of the project. The preferred alternative stores and treats the CSO, while the second alternative involves partial separation and storage. An artist has been hired and will be working with the design teams throughout the remainder of the design process.

This is a joint project between King County and the City of Seattle in response to Washington Department of Ecology regulations which require municipalities to reduce CSOs.

Discussion

Layzer: What other above ground structures are there?

Cochran: Just the facility.

Foley: The end result in alternative 1 is no combined sewage overflow to Lake Union, correct?

Cochran: The state allows one overflow per year per CSO.

Foley: Alternative 2 would separate the stormwater.

Cochran: In terms of impact on water quality, it is greater in the second alternative.

Foley: What will be the impact on the West Point Treatment facility?

Cochran: Minimal.

Wagoner: What changes will be made to the park?

Cochran: Just rehabilitation.

Swift: I think it's very important to keep in mind the current and future neighborhood context. Trying to imagine what that area will be like in 20 - 40 years is a good first step in trying to anticipate the evolution of the surrounding neighborhood.

Layzer: There will be a vacant parcel to the south of Lake Union. Will that be a pocket park, or is it maintained by King County?

Cochran: That is a good question. The property is not currently attractive, but that could change as the surrounding uses change.

Swift: It is the kind of site one looks at and wonders what could happen next?

Wagoner: Just some green relief would be welcome.

Swift: Thank you very much for this briefing. We are interested in public utilities. So much goes into them in terms of resources and then they just disappear. I think there are really some great opportunities for temporary artwork during construction to help the public understand what is taking place.

ACTION: **Briefing only, no action. The Commission thanks the project manager for the early briefing and commends the project for including an artist at an early stage of design.**